

Administration of Barack Obama, 2017

Memorandum on Promoting Diversity and Inclusion in Our National Parks, National Forests, and Other Public Lands and Waters

January 12, 2017

Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies

Subject: Promoting Diversity and Inclusion in Our National Parks, National Forests, and Other Public Lands and Waters

Our Federal lands and waters are among our Nation's greatest treasures—from our National Parks and National Forests, to our wild and scenic rivers, recreation areas, and other public lands and waters. These natural and historic sites give us fresh air and clean water, places for recreation and inspiration, and support for our local communities and economies. As a powerful sign of our democratic ideals, these lands belong to all Americans—rich and poor, urban and rural, young and old, from all backgrounds, genders, cultures, religious viewpoints, and walks of life.

Our public lands and waters are treasured in part because they tell the story of our Nation. They preserve the history from our Nation's wars, protect cultural sites considered sacred to countless Americans, and honor the accomplishments of distinctly American leaders ranging from Harriet Tubman to Abraham Lincoln to Cesar Chavez. I am proud that my Administration has greatly expanded the stories that our protected public lands and waters tell about our Nation through designating a diverse collection of cultural and historic sites as new parks and monuments and by restoring the Koyukon Athabascan name of Denali to the tallest mountain in North America. I am proud, too, that my Administration has sought to expand access to our public lands and waters and to make them more welcoming to all Americans, especially those who have not regularly visited our Nation's great outdoors or had the means to do so easily. Initiatives like "Every Kid in a Park" complement additional, ongoing efforts by Federal agencies to improve accessibility, but more work must be done to honor the promise and opportunity of the idea that our public lands belong to every American. Over the last 8 years, Federal land and water management agencies have also shown a renewed commitment to promoting equal opportunity for all employees and in creating work environments where everyone is empowered to reach their full potential.

The purpose of this memorandum is to ensure that all Americans have the opportunity to experience and enjoy our public lands and waters, that all segments of the population have the chance to engage in decisions about how our lands and waters are managed, and that our Federal workforce—not just the sites it manages—is drawn from the rich range of the diversity in our Nation. In this memorandum, "diversity" refers to a range of characteristics including national origin, language, race, color, disability, ethnicity, age, religion, sexual orientation, gender (including gender identity), socioeconomic status, veteran status, and family structure. The term "inclusion" refers to a culture that connects each employee to the organization; encourages collaboration, flexibility, and fairness; and promotes diversity throughout the organization so that all individuals have opportunities to participate and contribute to their full potential.

This memorandum is directed at the Department of the Interior, the U.S. Forest Service, the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (covered agencies).

Promoting diversity and inclusion is not the sole responsibility of one office within a Federal agency but a joint effort that requires engagement by senior leadership and the entire workforce. In implementing the guidance in this memorandum, each covered agency shall ensure its diversity and inclusion practices are fully integrated into broader planning efforts and supported by sufficient resource allocations and effective programs that promote a wide range of investments in personnel development, public engagement, and opportunities for inclusive access.

Therefore, by the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, I hereby direct the following:

Section 1. Diversity and Inclusion in the Federal Workforce. The quality and integrity of our National Parks, National Forests, and other public lands and waters depend on the public servants who steward them for the benefit of current and future generations. To ensure we are managing these resources responsibly, we must have a diverse and inclusive Federal workforce practicing public land management that recognizes the challenges facing communities across the Nation. A more diverse and inclusive Federal workforce also creates a more welcoming experience for all Americans, no matter their background or where they live, and encourages engagement with Federal agencies on the management and future of our public lands and waters. Consistent with existing authorities, each covered agency shall prioritize building a more diverse and inclusive Federal workforce reflective of our Nation and its citizens.

Federal agencies are subject to existing authorities aimed at addressing the leadership role and obligations of the Federal Government as an employer. For example, Executive Order 13583 of August 18, 2011 (Establishing a Coordinated Government-wide Initiative to Promote Diversity and Inclusion in the Federal Workforce), requires Federal agencies to take action to promote equal opportunity, diversity, and inclusion in the Federal workforce. Federal agencies also are required by section 717 of title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to take proactive steps to ensure equal opportunity for all Federal employees and applicants for Federal employment. This memorandum directs each of the covered agencies to pursue additional actions that create and maintain a diverse and inclusive Federal workforce. Toward that end, each covered agency shall integrate the following activities in its efforts to comply with related statutory mandates, Executive Orders, regulatory requirements, and individual agency policies:

(a) Provide professional development opportunities and tools. A diverse and inclusive work environment enhances the ability of each covered agency to create, retain, and sustain a strong workforce by allowing all employees to perform to their full potential and talent. Professional development opportunities and tools are key to fostering that potential, and ensuring that all employees have access to them should be a priority for all agencies, consistent with merit system principles. Accordingly, each covered agency shall:

- (i) Develop a mechanism to conduct periodic interviews with a voluntary representative cross-section of its workforce to gain a more complete understanding of the reasons that employees choose to stay with their organizations, as well as to receive feedback on workplace policies, professional development opportunities, and other issues;
- (ii) Provide optional exit interviews or surveys for all departing personnel;

(iii) Collect information as needed to identify methods for attracting applicants to Federal employment and retaining diverse workplace talent through existing workforce programs and initiatives;

(iv) Prioritize resources, as appropriate, to expand professional development opportunities that support mission needs, such as academic and fellowship programs, private-public exchanges, and detail assignments to private or international organizations, State, local and tribal governments, or other branches of the Federal Government;

(v) Offer, or sponsor employees to participate in, a Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program or other program that trains employees to gain the skills required for senior-level appointments. Each covered agency shall consider the number of expected senior-level vacancies as one factor in determining the number of candidates to select for such programs. In the selection process for these programs, each covered agency shall consider redacting personal information, including applicant names, from all materials provided for review to reduce the potential for unconscious bias. Each covered agency also shall evaluate on a retroactive basis the placement rate of program graduates into senior-level positions, including available demographic data, on an annual basis to look for ways to improve outreach and recruitment for these programs consistent with merit system principles. Each covered agency shall consult with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) on the development or enhancement of data-collection tools to conduct these evaluations; and

(vi) Seek additional opportunities for the development and implementation of upward mobility programs.

(b) Strengthen leadership engagement and accountability. Senior leadership and supervisors play an important role in fostering diversity and inclusion in the workforce they lead and setting an example for cultivating this and future generations of talent. Toward that end, each covered agency shall:

(i) Reward and recognize efforts to promote diversity and inclusion in the workforce. Consistent with merit system principles, each covered agency is strongly encouraged to consider implementing performance and advancement requirements that reward and recognize senior leaders' and supervisors' success in fostering diverse and inclusive workplace environments and in cultivating talent, such as through participation in mentoring programs or sponsorship initiatives, recruitment events, and other opportunities. Each covered agency also is encouraged to identify opportunities for senior leadership and supervisors to participate in outreach events and discuss issues related to promoting diversity and inclusion in its workforce on a regular basis with support from any existing employee resource group, as appropriate; and

(ii) Expand training on unconscious bias, diversity and inclusion, and flexible work policies. Each covered agency shall expand its provision of training on unconscious bias, diversity and inclusion, and flexible work policies and make unconscious bias training mandatory for senior leadership and management positions, including for employees responsible for outreach, recruitment, hiring, career development, promotion, and law enforcement. The provision of training may be implemented in a phased approach commensurate with agency resources. Each covered agency shall

also make available training on a 2-year cycle for bureaus, directorates, or divisions for which inclusion scores, such as those measured by the New IQ index, demonstrate no improvement since the previous training cycle. Special attention should be given to ensure the continuous incorporation of research-based best practices, including those to address the relationship between certain demographics and job positions.

(c) Analyze existing data and identify opportunities for improvement. Each covered agency shall continue to evaluate and eliminate existing barriers to the successful growth of diversity and inclusion in the Federal workplace. The following actions shall be taken to ensure continued progress on this issue:

- (i) Each covered agency shall integrate the activities described under subsections (a) and (b) of this section in the priorities and actions outlined in Executive Order 13583 and the periodic agency self-assessments and barrier analyses required by Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Management Directive 715, and shall make such assessments and analyses publicly available;
- (ii) Human resources and any appropriate diversity and leadership staff from each of the covered agencies shall meet at least twice each year with agency leadership to discuss actions pursued under sections 1(a) and 1(b) of this memorandum, including working to identify and eliminate barriers to promoting diversity and inclusion in agency workforces and to discuss potential actions to improve hiring programs, recruitment, and workforce training and development. Where data gaps are identified, each covered agency is encouraged to collect additional information as needed in order to identify methods for attracting and retaining talent from diverse populations, with particular attention to senior and management positions. Each covered agency shall consult with OPM on the development or enhancement of data-collection tools to collect this information; and
- (iii) OPM shall continue to review covered agency-specific diversity and inclusion plans and provide recommended modifications for agency consideration, including recommendations on strategies to promote diversity and inclusion in agency workforces and potential improvements to the use of existing agency hiring authorities.

Sec. 2. Enhancing Opportunities for all Americans to Experience Public Lands and Waters. (a) Recognizing that our public lands belong to all Americans, it is critical that all Americans can experience Federal lands and waters and the benefits they provide, and that diverse populations are able to provide input to inform the management and stewardship of these important resources. In order to achieve this goal, each covered agency shall:

- (i) Identify site-specific opportunities. As each covered agency periodically updates or develops new management plans for its lands and waters, it shall evaluate specific barriers and opportunities, as appropriate, to improve visitation, access, and recreational opportunities for diverse populations;
- (ii) Update policies to ensure engagement with diverse constituencies. As policy manuals and handbooks are updated, each covered agency shall ensure that these materials reflect the importance of engaging with diverse populations in resource protection, land and water management, and program planning and decisionmaking, as appropriate;

(iii) Establish internal policies for recipients of Federal funding. Each covered agency shall ensure that State, local, tribal, and private sector recipients of Federal funding are taking action to improve visitation, access, and recreational opportunities for diverse populations;

(iv) Identify public liaisons. Within 90 days of the issuance of this memorandum, each covered agency shall identify multiple public liaisons with a diversity of backgrounds and perspectives to be charged with facilitating input from and engaging with diverse populations in land and water management processes;

(v) Identify opportunities on advisory councils and stakeholder committees. Within 120 days of the issuance of this memorandum, each covered agency shall identify opportunities to promote participation by diverse populations in advisory councils and stakeholder committees established to support public land or water management; environmental, public health, or energy development planning; and other relevant decisionmaking; and

(vi) Develop an action plan. Within 1 year of the issuance of this memorandum, each covered agency shall provide a publicly available action plan to the Chair of the White House Council on Environmental Quality identifying specific actions the agency will take to 1) improve access for diverse populations—particularly for minority, low-income, and disabled populations and tribal communities—to experience and enjoy our Federal lands and waters, and 2) address barriers to their participation in the protection and management of important historic, cultural, or natural areas. Each covered agency shall identify in its action plan any critical barriers to achieving both of these goals. This barrier evaluation should draw on internal staff input as well as external perspectives, including interviews, surveys, and engagement with non-governmental entities, as appropriate and as resources allow. Each action plan should include specific steps that the covered agency will take to address identified barriers, including national as well as regional strategies, and, where appropriate, site-specific initiatives. Each covered agency should work through the Federal Recreation Council (FRC) to assist with the development of this action plan and use the FRC to share best practices and recommendations regarding specific programs and initiatives.

(b) In identifying actions to improve opportunities for all Americans to experience our Federal lands and waters, each covered agency should consider a range of actions including the following:

(i) Conducting active outreach to diverse populations—particularly minority, low-income, and disabled populations and tribal communities—to increase awareness about specific programs and opportunities;

(ii) Focusing on the mentoring of new environmental, outdoor recreation, and preservation leaders to increase diverse representation in these areas and on our public lands;

(iii) Forging new partnerships with State, local, tribal, private, and non-profit partners to expand access for diverse populations, particularly those in the immediate vicinity of a protected area;

(iv) Identifying and making improvements to existing programs to increase visitation and access by diverse populations—particularly minority, low-income, and disabled populations and tribal communities;

- (v) Creating new programs, especially those that could address certain gaps that are identified;
- (vi) Expanding the use of multilingual and culturally appropriate materials, including American Sign Language, in public communications and educational strategies, including through social media strategies, as appropriate, that target diverse populations;
- (vii) Continuing coordinated, interagency efforts to promote youth engagement and empowerment, including fostering new partnerships with diversity- and youth-serving organizations and new partnerships with urban areas and programs; and
- (viii) Identifying possible staff liaisons to diverse populations, particularly those in the immediate vicinity of a given protected area.

(c) In identifying actions to improve opportunities for all Americans to participate in the protection and management of important historic, cultural, and natural areas, each covered agency shall consider a range of actions including the following:

- (i) Considering recommendations and proposals from diverse populations to protect at-risk historic, cultural, and natural sites;
- (ii) Improving the availability and distribution of relevant information about ongoing land and water management planning and policy revisions;
- (iii) Identifying agency staff charged with outreach to diverse populations;
- (iv) Identifying opportunities to facilitate public participation from interested diverse populations facing financial barriers, including through partnerships, where appropriate, with philanthropic organizations and tribal, State, and local governments; and
- (v) Taking other actions to increase opportunities for diverse populations to provide input and recommendations on protecting, improving access to, or otherwise managing important historic, cultural, or natural areas, with an emphasis on stakeholders facing significant barriers to participation.

Sec. 3. General Provisions. (a) Nothing in this memorandum shall be construed to impair or otherwise affect:

- (i) the authority granted by law to an executive department or agency, or the head thereof, or the status of that department or agency within the Federal Government; or
- (ii) the functions of the Director of the Office of Management and Budget relating to budgetary, administrative, or legislative proposals.

(b) This memorandum shall be implemented consistent with applicable law, and subject to the availability of appropriations.

(c) The Secretary of the Interior is hereby authorized and directed to publish this memorandum in the *Federal Register*.

BARACK OBAMA

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NOTE: This memorandum was published in the *Federal Register* on January 19.

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